

DE News

September 14, 2001 – Iowa Department of Education – Ted Stilwill, Director

Note to Superintendents: *Normally this newsletter is directed to you and you are free to share it with any personnel in your district. If you have a convenient way of doing so, I would appreciate you sharing this newsletter more broadly with your staff.*

Response to a National Tragedy - the role of educators

This has been a week that has been marked with tragedy and trauma. Amid the shock and sadness felt by all, I must also convey a strong sense of appreciation and pride in the positive role Iowa educators have played in helping our students, particularly our young children, to understand and cope with these events. You all have faced the daunting task of responding to a wide variety of student needs and reactions, remaining calm during a crisis, and helping students to try to place irrational events in a rational context. No amount of training can fully prepare you for times like these, but your experience in understanding the differing needs of students may be your best guide.

So, thanks to every teacher, administrator and support staff for taking the time to listen to your students and for providing the continuity and stability that is so very important in these difficult times.

This also is an important time for us to support each other. Just as students have varying feelings, responses and reactions, adults also are affected by the trauma. Please be sensitive to the varying and different kinds of support that your colleagues may require.

We also can start thinking ahead to the next phases of coping with these events. We know that this situation is unique and that it likely will continue to evolve. Some of our template "crisis management" materials aren't as relevant. So the DE is forming a work group to monitor the events and ongoing results, as well as the needs of both educators and students. We'll do our best to provide guidance and materials accordingly. Some resources are already available on our website -

www.state.ia.us/educate/programs/success4/urt.html.

In the meantime, please review the resources you have available, or will need to have available, to provide ongoing assistance. Schools are only a part of the support system for our young people, so it's important to establish or tap into your community network of support, which should include community leaders, businesses, institutions of faith, service providers, families and educators.

Finally, this is a time to fully recognize our mutual citizenship in a country built on common values that will help us to endure and to defeat the kind of adversity currently before us. Our country was born out of a commitment to the freedom described by those values. That commitment will enable us to overcome the challenges of today just as it enabled every previous generation of Americans to overcome the adversities of their time.